INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD RELIGION

LESSON 2

I. THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE

A. Foundation

1. Nearly three thousands years ago, the Greeks started to emigrate eastwards towards Ionia. They settled on the islands in the Aegean Sea and on the coastline of Asia Minor.

a. The conditions found in Ionia were difficult.

(1) Backed by inhospitable mountain ranges, they settled in small walled towns and supported themselves with dry farming, capable of producing only some olives and a little wine.

(a) With farming ruled out as an option for survival, the Greeks turned towards the sea and soon found that they were the neighbors of two very large empires, the Babylonians and the Egyptians.

(b) Trade with these two empires seemed to be the natural solution to their problem, but they needed to resolve some basic questions concerning the founding of their society.

b. Both Babylonian and Egyptian cultures had developed urban civilizations based on an abundance of arable land and plenty of water.

(1) Their societies were theocratic, ruled by kings with magical powers.

(a) There had been little technological or scientific novelty, due to the extreme regularity of their physical environment and the rigidity of their social structures, which were based on the need to build and maintain vast irrigation systems.

(b) Babylonian mathematics and astronomy were restricted subjects whose study was permitted only to the priesthood. Egyptian geometry served exclusively to build pyramids and measure the area of inundated land or the volume of water reservoirs.

(2) Both cultures developed mythical explanations for Creation.

(a) With gods being responsible for all aspects of the world, and with minimal science and technology developed for practical necessities, their simple cosmology was complete.

(b) Unlike the Greeks, the environment made no demands on them which they were not able to meet. So other than figuring out how to kill their enemies more efficiently, there was no

inducement to learn to think or to develop their science and technology further.

c. The colonial Greeks were forced by their environment to adopt a more dynamic outlook.

(1) With no theocratic traditions to hold them back, they rejected monarchies at an early stage.

(a) They opted, instead, for republican city- states in which a small number of slave-owners governed by mutual consent.

(2) Babylonian astronomy, which had aided priests to make magic predictions, was pressed into service as an aid to maritime navigation.

(3) Contact with the Egyptians had planted the seeds of wonder in the intellectuals who accompanied the Greek traders on their trips around the Aegean.

(a) Rejecting the cosmologies of the Egyptians they formed the rudiments of what was to become philosophy.

(4) Seeking explanations to the world around them, they found ways of exploring nature in order to explain and control it.

(a) The Ionians took the geometry developed by the Egyptians and made a tool with many applications; such as measuring the distance from the coast to a ship at sea.

(b) Geometry became the basic instrument for measuring all things. All natural phenomena including light and sound, as well as those of astronomy, existed and could be measured in exclusively geometrical space.

(c) Simple analyses of natural phenomena such as water, beaches, clay deposits, phosphorescence, magnetism, evaporation and condensation as well as the behavior of the winds and the changes of temperature throughout the year led to the discovery that nature is made up of opposites.

(5) These simple analyses of phenomena and the observation of the presence of opposites combined with the political and economic structure of Ionian society produced the dominant intellectual structure which is the basis of modern western science.

(a) Geometry rendered the cosmos accessible to examination according to a common standard, quantitative scale.

(b) Together with the concept of pairs of opposites, geometry was to become the foundation for a rational system of philosophy that would underpin Western culture for thousands

of years.

(c) Rational thought followed a new logical technique developed by Aristotle called the syllogism, which provided an intellectual structure for the reconciliation of opposing views.

(d) In this way, the Ionians before him, and Aristotle, produced a system of thought that would guide men from the limited observations of personal experience to more general truths about nature.

B. The Middle Ages

1. During the latter part of the Roman empire, interest in science as founded by the Greeks waned and practically all Greek manuscripts went to Arabia.

a. In a way, Greek science was preserved for posterity by the Arabs, who themselves added very little to it.

(1) They did introduce to science the so called Arabic system of numbers, which used the zero as a place holder.

(a) To be sure, Alhazen produced a work on optics, but generally speaking Greek science was not improved upon to any appreciable extent by its translation into Arabic. (b) Science was still based upon the authority of Aristotle.

2. Between 700 and 1100 AD, a beginning was made toward a revival of learning in Europe.

a. Large universities developed under the shelter of the Church.

(1) Trade spread, and both Greek and Arabian manuscripts gradually found their way back into Europe.

(a) The Crusades assisted in this process.

b. Since the Church had survived the Roman state and had become all powerful, it was natural that the revival of learning should take place under its influence.

(1) Many of the scientific manuscripts were translated from the original Greek into Latin by monks, in monasteries where merchants and knights bringing treasures from the east would often seek shelter for the night.

(a) These scholars were satisfied just to make exact translations, and so the science which they passed on to the world through the Church was the original Aristotelian version.

(2) Although the church had re-established science in the

various large universities, it is important to remember that Church domination flavoured it to suit itself.

(a) The doctrines of Aristotle came to have the power of law behind them.

(b) Truth was not discoverable, by that time truth was dictated by the Church.

(c) It became a crime of the first order even to question the Church sponsored views of Aristotle, to say nothing of suggesting that experimentation might be a better way to establish the truth.

C. The New Awakening

1. During the Renaissance, universities were able to free themselves from Church rule and science was able to see the light of day without being shrouded in theology.

a. All of the following produced revolutionary ideas which led to their authors spending some part of their lives in prison because, while the Church did not have a stranglehold on the human mind, it still ruled with an iron fist and was always on the lookout for heresy.

(1) Copernicus developed the heliocentric theory of the universe.

(2) Galileao, Tycho Brahe, and Kepler established the fundamental ideas of modern celestial mechanics, based upon observation first, and theorizing afterward, thus revolutionizing scientific thought.

(a) Galileo in particular stressed the idea of controlled experimentation to such a degree that today he is recognized as the father of the modern scientific method based upon inductive rather than deductive reasoning.

(b) Galileo carried observation to the quantitative stage by making accurate measurements. He truly emphasized the 'how', as contrasted with the 'why' of Aristotle.

(c) By quantitative observations on falling bodies and other mechanical motions, assisted by instruments of his own invention to improve the accuracy of his measurements, Galileo laid the foundation for the discoveries of Newton.

(3) Sir Isaac Newton is considered by many to be the greatest scientific genius the world has produced thus far.

(a) He crystallized the scientific thought of his time into a few fundamental statements now accepted as laws of nature.

(b) These include three famous laws of motion and the law of gravitation in the field of mechanics alone.

(c) In addition, he invented calculus and contributed greatly to the field of optics.

(d) His role was primarily that of a co-ordinator of information or a systematizer of knowledge. He formulated the over all pattern by which scientific knowledge was to be organized in the great classical period that was to follow his time.

D. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Classical Period.

1. Science was really gathering momentum by this time and becoming very complicated.

a. The various branches of physics received recognition as fields that, while related, were becoming too complex to be included under the general heading of physics.

b. Chemistry was coming into its own after a balky start as the secret science of Alchemy.

c. Electricity was an infant science, with a great deal of promise.

E. The Modern Period (1890 to Present)

1. With the discovery of radioactivity and x-rays, along with the isolation of the electron, and the formulation of the concept of the electrical structure of matter, science moved into today.

a. In the early days, science was concerned with the observation of natural phenomena and the search for explanations of WHY they existed.

(1) As the emphasis shifted to HOW the phenomena worked the body of knowledge grew dramatically.

(a) Many varied disciplines developed to encompass general fields of specialized knowledge and sciences such as geology, oceanography, and meteorology came into their own.

(b) In the light of this tendency to form subgroups, the mother of all sciences, which was and is dedicated to the study of the physical world, came to be known as Physics.

b. The field of physics deals with three 'realities' of the physical world and has developed three interconnected world views to explain them.

(1) Classical Newtonian Model of the Universe

(a) This model of the universe works well when you deal with objects consisting of large numbers of atoms, and velocities which are small compared to the speed of light. In other words, our mundane world.

(2) Einstein's Relativistic Model of the Universe

(a) This model works well when considering objects on a planetary and larger scale that may be many light years away from each other. In this model the shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line, because gravity curves space.

(3) Quantum Theory of the Universe

(a) Quantum theory was developed to explain the behavior of subatomic particles. It is similar to Relativistic physics in that it deals with speeds approaching, and sometimes exceeding, the speed of light, but it considers small groups and singular particles at a time.

I. THE CRAFT VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE

A. Craft cosmology is rooted in the paleolithic Shaman's insight of the universe being made up of swirls of energy.

1. Everything is seen as vortexes of moving forces which are either swirling into existence or out again.

a. These vortexes of force set up currents in a sea of everchanging possibilities.

2. The appearance of separateness exists where fixed objects exist within a linear stream of time.

a. Reality, as we know it, is actually a temporary solidification of a field of energies into a physical form.

B. Rationale of the Two Principles

a. Stewart Farrar has proposed the following explanation of how Crafters integrate every phenomenon from chemistry to clairvoyance into a philosophical framework that allows them to constantly explain, examine, develop and improve their philosophy.

(1) The Theory of Levels maintains that a reality exists and operates on many planes.

(a) That each of these levels has its own laws.

(b) That these sets of laws, while special to their own levels, are compatible with each other.

(c) That mutual resonance governs the interaction between the

different levels.

(2) The Theory of Polarity maintains that all activity, all manifestation, arises from the interaction of pairs and complementary opposites.

(a) Pairs of opposites such as positive and negative, light and dark, content and form, male and female are not conflicts between 'good and evil', but a creative tension like that between the earth and the sky in a lightning storm.

III MODES OF PERCEPTION

A. Ordinary Waking Consciousness

1. Sees the world as made up of separate parts of matter.

a. While some of the arrangements of matter are recognized as living, few are recognized as intelligent.

b. Evolved as a means of survival.

(1) Allows a differentiation between things that are potentially threatening and those that are not.

(a) It works by narrowing the field of conscious perception to one thing at a time, isolating it from its surroundings.

(b) Starhawk describes it as viewing a dark forest with a narrow beam flashlight that illuminates a lone leaf or a solitary stone.

c. It casts a net across reality which allows us to break the whole down into pieces which can be examined one at a time or fitted together to get the 'whole picture'.

(1) It is based on a culturally transmitted system of classification which acknowledges the existence of phenomena that is perceived as valid by the majority and ignores anything that is not.

B. Extraordinary Waking Consciousness

1. Views the world as broad, holistic and undifferentiated.

a. Allows us to see patterns and relationships between all the vortexes of energy that make up the universe.

(1) Frees us from the constraints of our culture, but prevents us from sharing it with others who have not experienced it.

(a) The psychic and magical aspects of the Craft are concerned with shifting into and out of this mode of perception at will.

C. The Hemispheres of the Brain

1. The brain is actually composed of two specialized organs, which provide us with our perception of reality.

a. The brain is made up of several different structures, which are believed to have evolved as we became more adaptive to our environment.

(1) The Spinal Cord

(a) This is the oldest part of the brain, stretching from the neck down to the base of the spine.

(b) The two principle functions associated with the spinal cord are simple reflexes and to provide an electrical connection between the brain which controls the body and the nerves which cause the muscles to move the body and provide feedback to the brain.

(2) The Brain Stem

(a) This is situated on top of the spinal cord. It still possesses the tubular form of the spinal cord and in some respects can be thought of as an extension of it.

(b) There is a very intricate network of nerves in the brainstem known as the reticular formation. The reticular formation is the central point from which and to which all nerves run between the body and the brain.

(c) Visualizing the reticular formation as a telephone operators switchboard helps to understand its function. It sends all stimuli that has not proven to be benign to the brain for immediate attention and suppresses all other stimuli.

(d) The brain is still aware of all of the other stimuli, but it need not focus on all of it at once.

(3) The Cerebellum

(a) Connected to the brainstem is the cerebellum, which somewhat resembles the cortex in terms of its neuronal structure though it is much older than the cortex.

(b) The cerebellum is primarily concerned with the co-ordination of movements. It seems to integrate the information coming from all the senses with all the muscles so as to produce smooth, finely tuned movements rather than jerky unco-ordinated movements.

(4) The Midbrain

(a) The midbrain consists of the Thalamus, the Limbic System, and the Hypothalamus.

(b) The Thalamus sits on top of the brain and relays information from the sensory organs to the cortex and between different portions of the cortex and the reticular formation and the limbic system.

(c) The Limbic System is a group of structures in the middle of the brain that play an important role in emotion and motivation. Included in the limbic system is the pineal gland, which is thought by some to be the 'third eye.'

(d) Just below the thalamus is the Hypothalamus, which regulates the internal balance of the body. The pituitary gland is located here and it is the gland which tells all the other glands when to produce hormones.

(5) The Neocortex

(a) The Neocortex, or Cortex, as it is commonly called, makes up only one quarter of the brains total volume, but it contains 75% of all the neurons that make up the brain.

(b) The cortex is also known by its greyish color which is a result of a greater density of blood cells in this region. For this reason, the cortex is sometimes called 'grey matter' and the rest of the brain is called 'white matter.'

(c) Some areas of the cortex play particular roles in sensory activity. The rear of the cortex is associated with the processing of visual information, a small area on the side with auditory information, and a strip extending from the top center of the cortex down each side is concerned with the sense of touch and also with muscular control.

2. Large parts of the cortex do not appear to be very specific in their function.

a. Rather, they seem to be concerned with the integration of information from several different senses.

b. In other words, the cortex builds up a total world view based on all the information that is relayed by the body's senses.

c. In reality, the cortex is not just one structure, but two, which appear to have developed separate, but complementary, specializations.

(1) The left side of the cortex seems to have specialized in analysis.

(a) It is here that math ability is found, along with

understanding language and a sense of linear time.

(2) The right side of the cortex seems to have specialized in synthesis.

(a) Creativity, all forms of art, the sense of rhythm and music and a distinct lack of time sense characterize the states of consciousness which are attributed to the right side of the cortex.

d. To make things really interesting, these two sides of the cortex are connected by a mass of nerves, which form what is called the corpus callosum.

(1) It just so happens that the corpus callosum wires the brain up so that the right side of the body is controlled by the left side of the brain and vice versa.

I. THE CONCEPTS OF THE SELF

A. Classical Psychoanalysis

1. Freudian and Jungian Psychology

a. The Id and the Personal and Collective Unconscious

(1) Contains sensations, emotions, basic drives, image memory, intuition and diffuse perception.

b. The Ego

(1) Organizes the impressions of the unconscious, gives those impressions names, and classifies them into systems.

c. The Super-Ego

(1) A set of verbally understood precepts, that encourages us to make judgments about right and wrong according to the society in which we reside.

2. Transactional Analysis (T/A)

a. Child

(1) Corresponds to the Id and the Personal and Collective Unconscious.

b. Adult

(1) Corresponds to the Ego

c. Parent

(1) Corresponds to the Super-Ego

B. The Craft Concept of the Three Selves

1. Younger Self or Child

a. Corresponds to the Child mode of T/A

(1) Indirectly experiences the world, through the holistic awareness of the right hemisphere of the brain.

(a) Due to its limited verbal ability, Younger Self communicates through images, emotions, sensations, dreams, visions, and physical symptoms.

2. Talking Self

a. Corresponds to Adult and Parent modes of T/A

(1) Speaks through words, abstract concepts, and mathematics.

3. High Self

a. Does not easily correspond to any 'scientific' concept, because science refuses to accept the existence of a non-physical soul.

(1) The High Self, or God Self, is the Divine within the Self.

(a) It is the ultimate and original essence, the Spirit that exists beyond time, space and matter.

(b) It is our deepest level of wisdom and compassion and is conceived of as being both male and female, two forms of consciousness united as one.

C. Interactions Between the Three Selves

1. High Self is connected directly to Younger Self, and does not know how to communicate with Talking Self in a direct manner.

a. In order to communicate between High Self and Talking Self, we must learn to speak in Younger Self's language.

(1) We utilize symbols, art, poetry, music, myth, and the actions of ritual.

(a) These translate abstract concepts into the language of the unconscious and thus we can communicaate to the High Self through the Child Self.

V. THE FOUR PRICES OF FREEDOM

A. As in everything else in the world, nothing is free.

1. There are four prices that a Wiccan must pay in return for the

wisdom and power that they can gain through the Craft.

a. Paying these prices awakens our true potentials and allows us to be 'as gods', and thus help us to creat a better universe.

(1) Discipline and Responsibility

(a) To awaken the extra-ordinary mode of consciousness is a natural step in any Wiccan development but it requires a great deal of practice to develop and train it properly.

(b) Powers and abilities gained through this heightened awareness must also be used responsibly, for otherwise they will destroy their possessors.

(2) A Willingness to Play

(a) We unleash a great power when we are willing to let go of our adult dignity and laugh for no particular reason, without worrying about looking foolish.

(b) For example, we can make believe that a wand has magic power, and it becomes a channel for energy.

(c) Humour and play awaken the sense of wonder that characterizes Wiccans, and is the basic attitude that the Craft takes into the World.

(3) The need to maintain a balance between the different states of consciousness.

(a) The difference between magic and psychosis lies in maintaining the ability to step back, by an act of will, into the ordinary mode of perception.

(4) A willingness to face the most frightening of all beings, one's own self.

(a) The depth of our inner selves are not all sunlit.

(b) To see clearly, we must be willing to dive into the dark, inner abyss and acknowledge the creatures that we may find there as being a part of what makes us what we are.

VI. ANALYSIS OF THE CREATION MYTH

A. The Creation Myth which is located at the beginning of the Chapter Two of "The Spiral Dance" by Starhawk, expresses the attitude of wonder, to the world which is Divine and to the Divine which is the World.

1. In the beginning, the Goddess is the All, virgin, complete within Herself.

a. The female nature of the ground is stressed because the process of creation is a birth process.

(1) The world is born, not made, and definately not commanded into existence.

2. The Goddess sees Her reflection in the curved mirror of space.

a. Water is the original mirror on earth.

(1) The image conveyed is similar to that of the Moon floating over the dark sea, watching Her reflection in the waves.

b. There is yet another aspect of the mirror.

(1) A mirror is a reversed image. It is the same but opposite, of reverse polarity.

(a) The image in the mirror is the embodiment of the universal paradox.

(b) All things are one yet each is separate, individual and unique.

3. The Goddess falls in love with Herself, drawing forth Her own emanations which take on a life of its own.

a. Love of self for self is the creative force of the universe.

(1) Desire is the primal energy that motivates and that energy is erotic.

(a) It has been expressed as the attraction of lover to the beloved, moon to plant, and electron to proton.

(2) Blind Eros becomes Amor

(a) The love that is personal, directed towards an individual rather than the universal sexless charity of the Christian Agape or indescriminaate sexual desire.

(b) The Goddess' reflection takes on its own Being and is given a Name.

(c) Love is not only an energizing force but an individualizing force as well. It dissolves separation and yet creates individuality. Again, it is the universal paradox.

4. The sense of wonder, of joy and delight in the natural world is the essence of the Craft.

a. The world is not seen as a flawed creation from which we must escape, nor is it in need of salvation or redemption.

b. However it may appear from day to day by the nature of its deepest being, the world fills us with wonder.

5. Divine ecstasy becomes the fountain of creation and creation is seen as an orgasmic process.

a. Ecstasy is at the heart of the Craft.

(1) During ritual we turn the paradox inside out, and become the Goddess, sharing in the primal throbbing joy of union.

b. The Craft is a shamanistic religion, and the spiritual value placed on ecstasy is a high one.

(1) It is seen as the source of union, healing, creative inspiration, and communion with the Divine.

(a) Ecstasy brings about harmony.

6. By its very nature matter sings.

a. The song is carried forth on waves that become spheres.

(1) The waves are the waves of orgasm, light waves, ocean waves, pulsating electrons, waves of sound.

(a) The waves form spheres as swirling gases in space coalesce and form stars.

b. It is a basic insight of the Craft any energy, whether physical, psychic or emotional, moves in waves, in cycles that are themselves spirals.

7. The Goddess swells with love and gives birth to a rain of bright spirits.

a. It is a rain that awakens consciousness in the world as moisture awakens green growth on earth.

(1) The rain is the fructifying menstrual blood, the Moon's blood that nourishes life.

(a) It is also the bursting waters that herald birth.

(b) And birth is the ecstatic giving forth of life.

8. The motion or vibration becomes so great that Miria is swept away.

a. As She moves further and further from the point of union She becomes more polarized and more differentiated, until She become mostly male.

(1) The Goddess has projected Herself.

(a) Her projected Self becomes the Other, Her Opposite, who eternally yearns for reunion.

(2) The energy field of the cosmos becomes polarized.

(a) It becomes a conductor of forces exerted in opposite directions.

VII. ANALYSIS OF THE MYTH OF THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

A. The rituals of the eight Solar Holydays, the Sabbats of the year, are derived from the Myth of the Wheel of the Year.

1. The cycle of the Goddess which occurs on a monthly basis is contrasted to the slower cycle of the God, which takes a full solar year to complete.

a. The Goddess reveals Her threefold aspects as--

(1) Maiden

(a) She is the Virgin, Patroness of birth and initiation.

(2) Nymph

(a) She is the sexual temptress, lover, siren, and seductress.

(3) Crone

(a) She is the dark force of life, which demands death and personal sacrifice.

b. The God changes -- from Son to Brother to Lover, and eventually becomes His own Father.

(1) He is the eternal sacrifice who is eternally reborn into a new life.

(a) All things are divine as manifestations of the Goddess.

(b) The death of the grain in the harvest, or the death of a deer in the hunt, was considered to be a divine sacrifice freely made out of love so that life might go on.

VIII. EXAMINATION OF THE ALL AS TWO GREAT FORCES

A. The view of the All as an energy field polarized by two great forces is common to almost all traditions of the Craft.

1. These forces have been named Female and Male. And Goddess and God.

a. Which in their ultimate being are aspects of each other.

(1) It is important to separate the concept of polarity from our culturally conditioned images of female and male.

(a) The Female and Male forces represent a difference, yet they are not different in essence.

(b) They are the same force, flowing in opposite, but not opposed, directions.

2. The Female force is seen as the Life-giving force.

a. It is the power of manifestation, of energy flowing into the world to become force.

3. The Male force is seen as the Death-giving force.

a. This is death in a positive rather than a negative way.

(1) Death is seen as the Force of Limitation that is necessary to provide a balance to unbridled creation.

(a) It is the force of dissolution, of return to formlessness.

b. Each principle contains the other.

(1) Life breeds death and feeds on death.

(2) Death sustains life and makes evolution and new creation possible.

c. They are opposing halves of a complete cycle.

(1) They area each dependent upon the other.

4. Existence is sustained by the on/off pulse, the alternating current if you will, of the two forces in perfect balance.

a. Unchecked the life force is a cancer whereas the death force becomes unbridled war and genocide when allowed to go unbalanced.

(1) When held in balance they are in harmony and work to renew and sustain life.

(a) We see the effects of this balance in the changing cycle of the seasons, and in the ecological balance of the natural world.

IX OLD AGE IN THE CRAFT

A. The Craft does not maintain, like the first Truth of Buddhism, that "All life is suffering." On the contrary, we maintain that life is a

thing of wonder.

1. Old age is a natural and highly valued part of the cycle of life, the time of greatest wisdom and understanding.

a. We look forward to the time when we are freed from the cycle of reproduction so that we may devote more time to our preparation and contemplation of the journey into death at the end our years.

(1) This does not mean that the joys of sex become lost to us but that the urgency that wells up in the Spring and rides us through until the Autumn subsides and we get to go at our own pace.

(a) While the quantity sometimes decreases, the quality invaribly increases.

2. The Crone serves as a role model for both women and men in their later years.

a. A tendency to withdraw from society to a certain degree is coupled with a diminishing of compassion in favor of a little more emphasis on justice and balance.

(1) People soon find that appealing to the Goddess as the Mother brings help tempered by a mother's willingness to overlook the fact that most children bring problems upon themselves.

(a) Appealing to the Goddess as Crone however, gets a full measure of justice for all parties involved.

(b) The Crone does not play favorites, She has the severity of a strong will to see justice done, that prevents Her from doting on any of Her grandchildren.

3. Old age sometimes brings suffering.

a. Where suffering is a natural part of the cycle of birth and decay, it is relieved by understanding and acceptance. By a willingness to give over to both the dark and the light in turn.

(1) Disease can cause misery and suffering but it is not seen as something to be inevitably suffered.

(a) The practice of the Craft has always been connected with the healing arts, herbalism, and midwifery.

b. When suffering is the result of the social order or human injustice, the Craft encourages active work to relieve it.

(1) Witches are naturals for getting involved in the ecology movement and other movements that try to address the issues that they feel make society as a whole ill, both physically and spiritually.

4. Nor is death fearful in old age.

a. It is seen simply as the dissolution of the physical form.

(1) It allows the spirit to prepare to be reborn into a new life.

X. DEATH AS SEEN BY A MEMBER OF THE CRAFT.

A. The experience of death is a lesson for the living.

1. The people most affected by death are the people left behind who must learn to deal with their sense of loss.

a. In the Craft, death in this world is seen as a birth into the "other" world that has been given many names.

(1) The Summerland, Tirn-nan-og, and Avalon are all names given to a pleasant land, usually in the West, where people go to examine their past lives, grow young again, and prepare to be born into this world again.

(a) There are two theories about why the world beyond is thought to be in the west. One is that the last rays of the setting sun 'die' in the west and lead the way into the dark. While the other is that since the invaders always came from the east, the people who were being invaded came to think of the west as being safe because it was the direction they were running toward in order to get away from the invaders.

b. Rebirth is not considered to be condemnation to an endless, dreary round of suffering as in Eastern religions.

(1) Instead it is seen as the great gift of the Goddess who is manifest in the physical world.

(a) Life and the world are not separate from the Godhead. They are immanent in the divinity.

2. Since death is seen as a part of the natural order of things and the Witch is taught that the departed spirits go on to the next life to be watched over by the Goddess and the God until they are reborn, a Witch should not grieve over the loss of a loved one.

a. The realization of how much the departed person meant to the ones who are left behind is gauged by the memories that live on in the people still living.

(1) It is said that the departed do not die as long as their memory lives on in the hearts of the ones left behind them.

(a) Keeping the memory alive and participating in the seasonal celebrations prepares the people left behind for

being visited by the departed when the two worlds come close to one another at Hallows.

(b) It is always important to remember that a death in this world is a birth in the other world, and just as you did not have a lot of time for anything other than learning to function in this world when you were young, newly departed people have to learn to function in their new world and may not be able to visit as often as you would like.

3. The belief the Karma ties a certain number of souls together over and over again in many lives reassures people of the Craft that they will meet the departed in a new life.

a. Part of the training of the Craft is learning to see your own past lives in relation to the people around you and their past lives as well as discerning patterns of Karma in your everyday dealings.

END OF LESSON 2